



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	34 Edgar Avenue
Case:	HPC 2013.061
Applicant Name:	Esmail Mahdavi
Date of Application:	August 29, 2013
Recommendation:	Significant
Hearing Date:	September 17, 2013

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**I. Historical Association**

*Architectural Description:*

The structure is a 2½ story workers cottage with an interior L-shape plan that orients the gable to the street. One bay wide and three bays deep, a porch is located on the south side and the entrance is located at the corner. The exterior is sided in vinyl as well as the window replaced while the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. The house retains both a kitchen and parlor chimney, which are simple with a row of corbelled bricks three rows from the top.



*34 Edgar Avenue, photos 2012*

*Historical Description:*

This building was constructed as part of a subdivision on land belonging to Charles Hayes, drawn up by A. Wadsworth in 1861 (Plan 8, Book 16, Plate 68), sometime between 1874 and 1884 for workers' housing. The 1874 Hopkins Atlas shows that the land and mansard houses along Heath Street were constructed and owned by Dr. E.C. Drew of Boston. By 1884, the property is owned by Stackpole and the street is known as Mount Vernon Avenue. Through 1895, this was the only house on Edgar Avenue below Heath Street as several triple-deckers were constructed.

By 1884, the property is under the ownership of Stackpole and the structure is illustrated on the lot. John Stackpole is listed as a real estate agent in the 1884 City Directory, though directories state his residence was 157 Pearl Street and 3 New Cross Street (Cross Street East). The 1884 directory does state that George and John Manning, who were carpenters, lived in a house on Mt. Vernon Avenue (Edgar Avenue) near Heath Street. George Manning is listed as the head of household and may be the owner at that time. The 1895 Bromley Atlas illustrates Sarah F. Strand as the owner; however, she does not reside in the City.

By 1903, Fritz B. Guanoni, a waiter, lives at this location. In 1913, Carl F. Giannone, also a waiter, is noted as the household head. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Mrs. Catherine Dondero, a widow, resides with Charles Rowell (auto mechanic), his wife Mabel, John Silva (painter), and his wife Helen, which indicates that the building has been converted into a two-family residence. A building permit was given to Genonie in 1924 to repair the foundation. City directories from 1944 through 1964 list the Giannone family again as residents, which indicates they likely owned the property from at least 1903 through the mid-1960s. Names and occupations of the Giannone family are as follows: Ernest I.; Edward; Walter A. (chauffeur); Walter J. (navy); Frederick C. or Carl F. (waiter); Elizabeth; and Gloria. In 1954, eight members of this family resided here.

*Context/Evolution:* The development of Winter Hill was primarily on the south side, while farms and industrial developments were located north of Broadway. Therefore, housing in this area served workers rather than middle or upper classes. Streets were laid out between 1860 and 1874 with few houses located on Heath and Brooks Street (now Fremont). *Somerville Beyond the Neck* states that many buildings in the area were moved to Partridge Street and elsewhere so the brickyards could continue to access the clay.

*Summary:*

34 Edgar Avenue is the oldest structure on the street and has housed the working class since at least 1884. While the style is unknown, the structure likely would not have been very ornate. The structure is associated with the Giannone family for the majority of the twentieth century.

**Findings on Historical Association**

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) **importantly associated with people, events or history** or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (b) are at the end of the next section.*

**(a)** In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff find 34 Edgar Avenue to be importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth.

The subject building is found to be associated with the broad cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the location of this building as the first structure on this street and as a structure that housed the working class.

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## II. Historical and Architectural Significance

*The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B).*

The period of significance for 34 Edgar Avenue begins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century upon the date of construction and continues until this structure no longer houses the working class.

### ***Integrity***

*The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.*

- a. Location: The subject dwelling is centered on the lot with two side yards and a rear yard. This location has not been altered, but is situated within a context of buildings constructed at a later date. This is the only structure of this size and massing on this street and a new development is being constructed around this building (see aerial photograph at end of report).
- b. Design: The design of the building does not reference a specific style; however, the building is one bay wide and three bays deep with an entry in the corner on the left side. The form and massing are still understood as is a majority of the fenestration pattern.
- c. Materials: A majority of the original materials have been either covered or removed. Currently, the interior of the structure has been removed so as to rehabilitate the structure; however, in removing the interior finishing material, it was discovered that structural posts had previously been removed, which has caused the building subsequent distress to remaining structural members.
- d. Alterations: Predominant alterations refer to the change in materials; the form and massing remain consistent with the original intent.

### ***Evaluation of Integrity:***

Alterations, such as replacement windows, siding and asphalt shingles, have modified the exterior appearance of this two-family dwelling over the years. However, while the form and massing remain in tact and visible, the structure does prevent some structural deficiencies due to later alterations to the side porch. Qualities that continue to convey significance include the location of the building on the parcel and the fenestration pattern, while spatial relationships to other buildings on Edgar Avenue represent a later time period and are not consistent with this structure.

### Findings for Historical and Architectural Significance

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) **historically or architecturally significant** (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (a) can be found at the end of the previous section.*

(b) In accordance with the *Finding on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, which assess the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff do not find 34 Edgar Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

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### III. Recommendation

*Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public meeting for a Determination of Significance. This report may be revised or updated with a new recommendation and/or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through further research.*

*For a Determination of Significance, the structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.*

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

**OR**

(B) The structure, circa 1874, is at least 50 years old.

**AND**

*For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) **historically or architecturally significant**.*

(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 34 Edgar Avenue importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth.**

**OR**

(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the**

**Historic Preservation Commission do not find 34 Edgar Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**

*Aerial view of 34 Edgar Avenue*

